area under staple foods to commercial crops like sugarcane, cotton, oilseeds, foodgrains, the output growth rate has come down to minus 3.19% the lowest rate since the days of Green Revolution; and

(d) if so, the reasons for providing more incentives for setting up of sugar mills which would further lead diversion of the area?

THE MINISTER OF FOOD AND MINISTER OF CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI DEVENDRA PRASAD YADAV): (a) to (d) Yes, Sir, The news report indicate that with the grant of incentives, large area under food crops like wheat and rice would get converted into sugarcane which would lead to a shortage of foodgrains.

The area under sugarcane is very small as compared to the area under foodgrain crop. The annual growth in foodgrains production during the period 1990-91 to 1996-97 has been 1.70 percent. For setting up new sugar mills, an investment of the order of Rs. 40 crores is required and therefore, incentives by way of increased quota of freesale sugar is necessary to enable them to repay their term loans.

चीनी मिलों का बदं किया जाना

1536. श्री इकबाल सिंह : क्या खाद्य मंत्री यह बताने की कृपा करेंगे किः

(क) विगत तीन वर्षो के दौरान अब तक देश के विभिन्न राज्यों में स्थित चीनी मिलों को कब-कब बंद किया गया और इनके बदं करने के क्या कारण है,

(ख) क्या यह भी सच है कि संबंधित चीनी मिले बदं हो जाने के कारण किसान अपनी गन्ने की फसल को नहीं बेच सके और अंततः उन्हें गन्ने की फसल में आग लगानी पड़ी, जिससे राष्ट्र को काफी नुकसान हुआ;

(ग) इससे देश के कितने किसानों को कितनी क्षति हुई और इनकी क्षतिपूर्ति किस प्रकार की गई; और

(घ) ऐसी सभी चीनी मिलों के विरूद्ध सरकार ने क्या –क्या कार्यवाही की, और यदि नहीं, तो सरकार देश के किसानों के हितों की रक्षा के लिए क्या उपाय कर रही हैं?

खाद्य मंत्री तथा नागरिक आपूर्ति, उपभोक्ता मामले और सार्वजनिक वितरण मंत्री (श्री देवेन्द्र प्रसाद यादव) : (क) से (घ) अपेक्षित सूचना सम्बंधित राज्यों से एकत्र की जा रही है ।

Sugarcane price due to Growers

1537. SHRI RAJUBHAI A. PARMAR:
SHRI SUSHILKUMAR SAMBHAJIRAO SHINDE:

Will the Minister of FOOD be pleased to state:

(a) the arrears of sugarcane prices due to growers on the eve of the current years' crushing season, in Maharashtra, U.P. and other States and in the country as a whole;

(b) the amount of the arrears which has been paid this year; and

(c) the steps being taken to ensure full clearance of arrears before crushing starts for the next season?

THE MINISTER OF FOOD AND MINISTER OF CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI DEVENDRA PRASAD YADAV): (a) and (b) As per the information received from the sugar mills, the cane price arrears due to the sugarcane growers for the sugar season 1995-96 (October-September) as on the eve of the current crushing season i.e. on 30.9.19% were Rs. 707.30 crores and the amount paid to the farmers during the current 1996-97 crushing season out of the balance to be paid pertaining to the season 1995-96 as on 15.1.1997 was Rs. 396.22 crores.

(c) The responsibility for ensuring timely payments of cane price dues lies with the State Governments which have the necessary powers and field organisations to enforce such payments. The Central Government, on its part, has taken measures for improving the

financial position of sugar factories to enable them to pay the farmers' dues, such as grant of incentives for late crushing, creation of buffer stock, permission for export of sugar, revision in guidelines by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to the banks enabling sugar factories to draw more credit from the banks and extra releases of freesale sugar to deserving factories.

Export of wheat—despite its low, production

1538. DR. D. VENKATESHWAR RAO: Will the Minister of FOOD be pleased to state:

(a) the factors responsible for export of wheat in early 1996 in the face of decline in production from 65.3 million tonnes in 1995 to 62.2 million tonnes in 1996;

(b) the action taken against those involved for taking decisions non-judiciously;

(c) the reasons of rise in the prices of rice every months; and

(d) the steps proposed to control price of rice to affordable limit of common man?

THE MINISTER OF FOOD AND MINISTER OF CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI DEVENDRA PRASAD YADAV): (a) Initially, in April, 1996, the likely production of wheat during 1995-96 was projected at 66.21 million tonnes. Subsequently in September, 1996 production estimate of wheat was revised to 62.62 million tonnes representing a fall of about 3.15 million tonnes in the production of wheat during 1995-96 compared to the previous year. On receipt of this information, export ceiling for non-durum wheat was brought down to 10.00 lakh MTs from the initial 25.00 lakh MTs. The main factors that weighed with the Government in permitting export of wheat in early 1996 included the following:—

(i) Production of comfortable wheat production during 1995-96 by Ministry of Agriculture;

(ii) comfortable stock level of 7.58 Million Tonnes of wheat in the Central Pool in April 1996 as against buffer norm of 3.7 Million Tonnes;

(iii) to contain the subsidy burden by reducing the carrying cost of excess stocks held in the Central Pool;

(iv) to release valuable godown space for accommodating incoming freshly procured stocks;

(v) to avoid loss of' foodgrains through deterioration in quality caused by prolonged storage.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) The index number of wholesale prices of rice in February, 1997 has shown an increase of 15% over the corresponding period last year, mainly due to a psychology of scarcity created by the fall in production in foodgrains during 1995-96.

(d) Government is closely monitoring the price situation. The steps taken to control the rise in prices of rice include the following:—

(i) Increased allocation of rice for supply through Public Distribution System;

(ii) Food Corpofation of India is taking steps to issue an additional 5 lakh tonnes of rice under Open Market Sales Scheme (Domestic) over and above the PDS allocation;

(iii) A Restructured PDS for supply of foodgrains at specially subsidised prices to the people living below poverty line is being *implemented;*

(iv) All State Governments/Union Territory Administrations have been advised to take strict action against harders and black marketers under the Essential Commodities Act. 1955, Prevention of Black Marketing and